



fireball

E-news

Edition 3 July 2017

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Hayling Delivers

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Chairmans Report

Welcome to Fireball e-News edition 3! I hope you will find it of interest!

The season is now well and truly underway and, by the time you read this, the first five open events of the year will have taken place and attention will be focussed increasingly on the combined European & UK National Championships to be hosted by Lyme Regis in August. For those of you who have yet to enter it will undoubtedly be the Fireball event of the year and, from reviewing the competitor list, it is going to be truly international!

The Dinghy Show is now but a distant memory but this is the first Fireball e-news for a few months (we'll move onto regular thrice-yearly publication dates soon) so a quick catch up is in order. The Fireball stand was smaller than usual and very busy. Next year we'll revert to the larger space we're all used to. I spent all day on Saturday on the stand and am pleased to say there was non-stop activity. What was particularly encouraging was the number of enquiries we had from youngsters looking to move into the class. It was also great to see the mods on Dave Wade's new boat generating interest.

On the theme of innovation, both Dave Wade and Vyv Townend & Christian Birrell have been looking to find ways of sheeting boom closer to, or over, the centre line. They have chosen different solutions (see later in this bulletin) and it will be interesting to see how both boats get on. Innovation is a great thing and keeps the class fresh and moving ahead in which regard Simon Hextall has very kindly agreed to allow his twin pole-rigged Fireball to be displayed at the Europeans. This will allow Fireball International Council members to form a view on whether or not to vote in favour of the UKFA's proposal to permit the use of twin poles. Dispensation has been granted for a chute-fitted Fireball rigged with twin poles to compete at the event.

We are very much in the age of social media and a great number of people communicate almost exclusively through social networks. Then again, there are many – but fewer – people who are quite the opposite! What this means is the association has to deliver messages through a number of media outlets and do its best to link everything together. Hence the association's new website exhibits low activity levels – the forum is very quiet indeed – as more people than

not converse via Facebook groups but the UKFA Facebook page feeds into the website to allow non-Facebook users to keep up! Several new Fireball-related Facebook groups have been created recently – the Blackwater fleet now has one as does the South West UK group and, more generally, the Fireball Dinghy Centre has been created for those wishing to sell Fireballs and Fireball-related gear (it's working quite well, too!). Whether you're a fan of the Fireball Facebook pages or the UKFA website please do use them – high activity levels are important.

The Committee has been working hard on various matters but special thanks go to Russell Thorne and Richard Anderton who have put a massive effort into organising this year's Europeans/Nationals. In organising a championship there really are a huge number of details to consider and the potential for oversight is very real. Sadly, Rick Cornes and Sophie Holden have decided to step down from the committee – they do so with my thanks for their hard work during the last year. However, in their stead, I am delighted to welcome John Piatt and Sophia Benson on board as Open Meeting and Youth Coordinators respectively. We continue to look for volunteers and a priority right now is to find someone who can look after our marketing and PR. If you're interested, or know someone who may be interested, please get in touch!

Lastly, but absolutely by no means least, I am very pleased to let you know that the association has secured support from UK Global and from Hayling Island Sailing Club. Their belief in, and commitment to, the Fireball class is greatly appreciated and represents a clear endorsement of the class's position within UK sailing. As you will see, both organisations are making generous offers to the Fireballing community.

In signing off, please may I encourage you to attend the UKFA AGM which is scheduled for 8.00 pm on Monday 21 August at Lyme Regis SC. It is your chance to speak out on all things Fireball!

Chris Turner

Nats & Euros 2017

The event of 2017 is almost here



With 80 boats entered at time of going to press, the 2017 UK Nationals and European Championships at Lyme Regis SC promises to be the event of the season.

Boats are attending from Australia, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Canada, The Czech Republic, Ireland and of course a strong home contingent.

With a comprehensive social calendar and a venue famous for big waves, this is one not to miss.



Are you entered yet?

Gul Code Zero Event Jacket – Order Yours Today

Gul are offering their Code Zero softshell jacket with Fireball 2017 branding for the event.



The jacket is available in either BLACK or BLUE colour options, and the sizes available are as follows – XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL.

The cost of the jacket will be £90.00 inc VAT. All orders are to be placed with Chris Humphries from Gul – chrish@gul.com.

Jackets will be delivered to the regatta for collection from CoastWaterSports, with payment taken at the time of collection.



Hayling Open 2017

Report-Nick Rees Images-Peter Hickson



Hayling Island is a Fireball favourite and with good reason. A strong local fleet, a great and varied race area and the infamous Hayling Bar makes for exciting racing and that's before we get to the amazing club house, perched right on the beach.

If Carlsberg did sailing clubs...

The Fireball Open meeting at Hayling Island brought 25 boats to the south coast to enjoy two days of great racing and glorious sunshine. The weekend was shared with both the Merlin and Contender fleets who also had Hayling Open meetings.

The race committee elected to combine all three classes onto one course in Bracklesham Bay with two committee boats – one manning a finishing line at the leeward mark, and the other a starting line halfway up the beat. This was very successful with the committee able to keep the racing flowing, with little or no hanging around between races – particularly because if a class had

a general recall they went to the back of the queue. The first start was a Merlin one and their general recall was enough to persuade the rest of us to stay under control.

The first day started with 15 knot breezes from the south that gradually



subsided and clocked left slightly during the day. There were three races in a range of conditions, the first being consistently 15 knots, and the last ending with boats struggling to get to the finish in 6 knots of breeze and a strong tide. The sail-in was the longest part of the day, with boat-builder David Winder trying to emulate some of the locals by taking a short-cut across the breaking waves, and finding that 6 inches of water was not enough.



All three races were won by long time Fireball sailor and 2014 world champion, Christian Birrell, with 5 time world champion Vyv Townsend crewing. However, not far behind was Kevin Hope and Russell Thorne with 2-4-2, and current world champion Tom Gillard, with new crew Geoff Edward with 3-2-3 (Tom's crew for the past few years, Richard Anderton, being side-lined with a knee injury). Another favourite, Matt Burge was doing well until the second last leg of the first race when his rudder parted company from the boat, and then refused to go back on its pintles, leading to an early shower.

The second day started with a long fetch out against the tide, with a dose of the waves that were going to become a feature of the day, with long rolling breakers coming across Hayling bar. The wind started at 15 knots, the same as the previous day, but was more from the south-west, and it built through the day, until in the second race the boats were sailing in "full-on" conditions of 20-25 knots with large seas. Tom and Geoff found the conditions more to their liking recording two good wins, despite being pushed by Christian and Vyv for most of the time. By the end of the second race, many competitors had switched to survival mode, with a number of competitors checking the condition of their centreboard gasket - at one point the gybe mark resembled a Merlin graveyard.

Ultimately, only two races were sailed on Sunday, because the tide was going to change by the time a third race had finished and the race committee has long memories of large fleets battling in over Hayling bar in wind against tide conditions – the 1979 Fireball Nationals is still part of club folklore where nearly 20 masts were broken in one afternoon. Even without an adverse tide the conditions were challenging enough, with one mast being broken on the way in, so all competitors were happy to get ashore and head to the bar to add a few more Hayling Island bay stories to their repertoires.

Nick Rees.



HAYLING ISLAND SAILING CLUB JOIN TODAY

We welcome new members across all ages, sailing abilities & class of dinghy or cruiser. The club offers some of the finest sailing, shore & social facilities anywhere, & supports a wide range of sailing-related activities, including dinghy racing & cruising, sailing training, youth sailing, windsurfing, cruiser & social sailing.

For more information, please visit our website www.hisc.co.uk where you can download an application form

For a limited time, the Joining Fee is waived for new members actively sailing or crewing a Fireball saving you up to £350.



Club Focus

Draycote in Warwickshire has one of the largest Fireball fleets in the country. Its a great stretch of water and will host this years Inland Championships.

Club member and open meeting co-ordinator Pat Collison shares his thoughts on a great club..

Draycote Water provides an ideal Fireball sailing venue offering 650 acres of water which allows for some long uninterrupted spinnaker legs. Located in the rolling Warwickshire countryside it has good access from M1, M6, M45 and M40 motorways. Draycote Water Sailing Club is a members' club and is open with professional safety cover 364 days a year.

The Draycote Fireball fleet is very active and is one of the largest in the club, with 20+ boats and 7 to 10 regularly taking part in club racing, held on Sundays throughout the year and on Wednesday evenings through the summer. The club holds winter and summer series and there are usually more Fireballs on the start line than other performance boats.

For fleet racing, we run separate 'Gold' and 'Silver' fleets, to distribute the silverware more evenly and encourage all standards (and depth of pocket) to compete. Whilst white Winders may be the order of the day for many, we still have competitive composite and wooden boats and have our own fleet boat that can be borrowed for those wishing to try their hand (or for those whose boat is off the water for a little TLC).

The Draycote Fireball fleet is looking forward to hosting the 2017 Fireball Inland Championships on 14th and 15th October 2017.

The Draycote Fireball fleet is an eclectic mixture of 'die hard' long-term fireball enthusiasts, helm or crews moving from other fleets and newcomers to sailing. Draycote helms and crew range from under twenty well into their sixties in age and of "all shapes and sizes" (to be polite). We are also well represented by ladies as both helm and crew.

The Draycote Fireball fleet is a friendly bunch and always ready to welcome new members or those who simply want to try something new. For those who already own a Fireball, you can turn up, pay your fees and start sailing. We currently have a special offer for non-members who join DWSC with a Fireball. The Fireball fleet will pay the joining fees (which are charged by the club) of up to two people per incoming Fireball - helm and/or crew. With the current joining fee being £50 per person, this could result in a saving of up to £100 for a helm and crew combined (Note a maximum of 10 joining fees will be paid, when the 10th fee is paid, the offer will end). The club also offers a special winter membership, which would benefit Fireballers that want to participate in an active winter race series.

For those who want to come and try Fireball either as helm or crew, we will be happy to arrange an experienced sailor to take you out for a jolly round the lake. The 'old hands' are always willing to give advice to new members, be it be on sailing skills, boat and gear choice or setting up/maintenance.

DWSC also benefits from a well-equipped clubhouse with wet bar providing hot and cold food and comfortable licensed bar.

Pat Collison.



Youth

The future of Fireball

Tipping the Scales...

One of the beautiful things about the Fireball is the wide range of crew weights that can complete across varying conditions. Anthony and James Willcocks have followed their parents into the class and have racked up some impressive results. Here they share their top tips for competing with the top boats.

Let us see the light...

Lightweight Fireball Sailing by Anthony and James Willcocks

To give you idea of light weight...Helm 60kg Crew 52kg =112kg .

Your first consideration for heavy weather sailing is boat setup. It is all about keeping the boat moving and stopping the gusts from knocking you over particularly up wind. Flat sails are a good start! Our main is flatter cut and the spinnaker is flatter and smaller. Both these things make the boat more manageable. Aside from sail cut here are some tips for managing the boat on the course:

1)Upwind

In breeze upwind it's about steering to keep the boat upright pinching most of the time and luffing more in the gusts, the amount of heel is controlled by balancing the amount you luff with the main but generally steer to stop the main flogging... but balance this with maintaining speed, particularly in waves! When it's really breezy or gusty it is not possible to stop the main flogging and the jib will have to be eased too. Generally heavier crews will not be pointing in breeze and will plane upwind in these conditions

although this is not possible with a light crew but can be just as quick to the top mark. With the exception of the first beat we only lose one or two places upwind which can be made up downwind and with boat handling!

Raise the Centreboard until the boat stops 'tripping' over in the gusts about 3/4 or even 1/2 board upwind. Even then you may need to ease the Jib 1/2 an inch in big gusts. Set the jib bars out and up to open the slot and let the boat accelerate in the gusts.

For the main we use an extra block tied to the gooseneck to increase the cunningham purchase. Then pull the cunningham as tight as you can which helps flatten the sail and outhaul on as tight as you can. For the kicker again as tight as you can unless it gets really windy, then letting a little bit go allows the sail to open and reduces the righting movement at the top of the mast.

2) Reaching

On very tight breezy reaches boat speed is just as fast, sometimes faster as a light crew when 2 sail reaching rather than a heavy crew holding the kite - also no lost time on the hoist. Tripping the kite halyard to 'Aussie Drop' can keep you in touch with virtually no loss in speed! Most of the time the main is flogging completely on a tight reach (this is not unusual!), kicker right off to keep the boom out the water, steering can be quite aggressive looking to take height wherever you can, even if only for a couple of seconds. You need to bear off in the gusts but not too much otherwise the rig powers up and you lose height very quickly. The boat can heel as much as you want as long as you don't capsize, or let the boom hit the water... power is controlled on the main sheet which needs to be moved quickly in

combination with steering, sheeting in to gain height (with kicker is off any power is low down).

3) Running

If windy on the run, 'wild thing' and reach the runs which is particularly good if you are light as you can plane earlier and go lower than the heavy teams. If the top guys are doing it then you definitely can! If dead running make sure you use

A lot can be gained in the race through the start however when you're light, holding a lane for any period of time is almost impossible. Despite this you must still try to be on the front row and up on the line and up to speed at the gun. This will give you an advantage over much of the fleet. Slowly the faster boats will come by, you need to be prepared for this and focus on getting clear air.



the waves to surf this for extra power - this is the only point where being lighter helps!

Boat handling is key as the better your boat handling is, the easier it is to react to a situation and the less likely you are to capsize when tacking/gybing/bearing away. Getting a set routine for tacks, gybes and hoists that is consistent in all wind strengths helps. This means you have confidence to put the boat in the places you need it and gain a small advantage for every tack or gybe. At leeward mark roundings try to be on the inside to give the best advantage up the next beat. Still try to work the shifts as any advantage is good.

Lastly -

Mind set!

In 15knts+ you will be overpowered up wind and on the reaches and in 20knts+ the effects increase. You won't be able to keep up with people you usually beat in lighter winds. The hard thing is, even if you are sailing your best, people with more weight will just sail past. You can't stop this but you can adopt a mindset try to maintain or make up as many places as you can. It is about surviving when others capsize. This comes from a manageable boat (good set up), boat handling and as good start as you can get!

Anthony & James Wilcocks

Technical

Strutting your stuff

To strut or not to strut? That is the question.. They have veered from being the latest must-have innovation, to being as square as a 'mullet' and to being as cool as a cool thing from the planet cool. Keith Walker shares his thoughts..

Records (International Fireball magazines) indicate the strut was first used at the 1975 Worlds in La Rochelle and was used to great effect by US sailors Joan and Art Ellis who won the event. Interestingly their boat had aft sheeting and Art played the mainsheet upwind -nothing new under the sun! The Ellises regarded the strut essential for vang sheeting.

Steve Benjamin and Tucker Edmondson won the 1976 Worlds in Canada using a strutted rig- their strut fixed at just below gooseneck height. Like the Ellises they use a Z spar mast which they kept as straight as possible for their very flat Sobstadt main. The strut was used to reverse bend the mast prior to hoisting the main, this and high rig tension with short spreaders kept the mast straight below the hounds. This was a very powerful rig which, with their ideal crew weight combination (Benj at 145 pounds and Tucker at 200 pounds) they used to devastating effect.

1977 Worlds saw the "shootout" between Steve Benjamin using the same Sobstadt/Z spar rig and Lawrie Smith using Musto and Hyde sails on a Proctor D mast i.e. the typical bendy rig used by most British Fireballers at this time. Steve Benjamin won this closely fought contest between two very talented teams.

Mike Mountifield who finished second to Steve Benjamin in the 1976 Worlds commented on these rigs in an article he wrote for the

International Fireball Magazine entitled "To strut or not to strut". In simple terms he pointed out that the strutted rig (flat main, with little twist and fullish jib) is at its optimum in steady wind speeds but is difficult to tune for variable conditions, whereas the bendy rig (fullish main with twist and flat jib) works well in puffy conditions and is more easily adjusted for changes in wind speed, sea conditions and crew weight.

Mike also recalled the upwind speed that Steve Benjamin had, enabling him to pull out a 2 ½ minute lead over the second boat in a 20 minute beat!

In the aftermath of these developments many British sail makers and teams experimented with their own version of the straight luff strutted rig some of whom were very successful.

Over the years (decades!) every conceivable rig configuration and mast bend control has been tried. Struts are still to be seen but they are generally used for pre bending and changing the depth of the mainsail NOT for keeping the mast dead straight. Needless to say a full main set on a straight mast would be disaster.

In more recent years, top 470 sailors have influenced rig development in the Fireball class. Mast bend being controlled with chocks, reflecting the 470 arrangement which usually uses beads on a wire strop (or similar) at the mast gate, struts are not permitted. The simplicity of chocks has not prevented top crews from winning World, European and National championships. Our current World Champion uses chocks! This begs the question, is the ability to change pre bend with a strut while racing just an unnecessary distraction particularly when championship races last just 50 minutes to an hour? Easing rig tension is, for example, a ploy some use when there is a big increase in wind

speed and removing chocks is not possible. This means mast bend and rake are increased.

Perhaps the most obvious observation to make about the descriptions of the early rigs is that there is less emphasis on changing mast rake which is currently the usual means by which teams change gears. Light crews rake earlier. With a fixed strut easing rig tension to rake the mast will put the strut under tension which will bend the mast but spreaders would be less effective.



Changing rake using pins is normally accomplished between races not during them. However, adjustable shrouds using multiple purchases (see pic above) can be used to change rake while racing; some teams can do this while sailing up wind (!), but as with mast bend, is this process just a distraction in a short race?

One advantage of controlling mast bend at deck level is that the natural characteristics of the spar and its gust response are retained, whereas a strut which is say 400 mm or more above the deck is likely to inhibit the natural behaviour of the

spar which is not very desirable in windy conditions. As we have seen, having the strut terminating at or near the gooseneck can lock the rig; this is fine if the main is cut to suit.

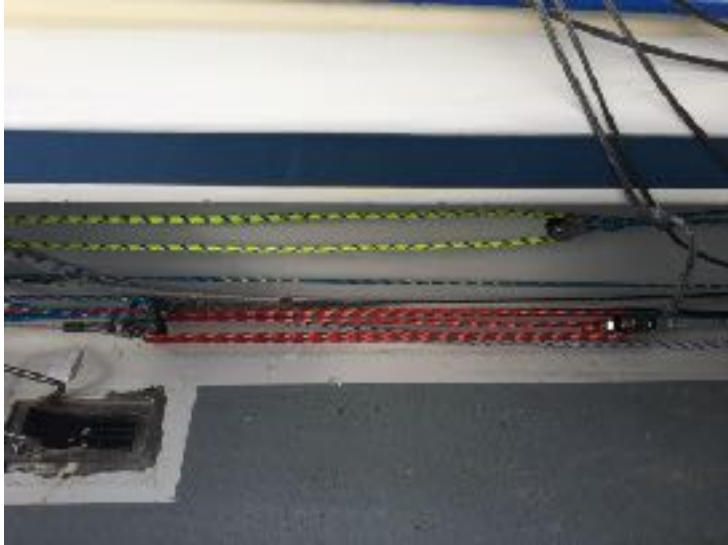
In reality the appropriateness of these various arrangements is in any case dependant on which spars and sail shapes are being used.

Many boats currently have the strut mounted on a car running on a track fitted to the foredeck; this usually involves some expensive hard ware, though the fittings are included with the hull weight. However, the geometry of this arrangement is not ideal since the car is only moving millimetres which is not easy to control precisely or calibrate.



The general arrangement shown in the previous pic has a number of advantages.

As you see the lightweight traveller track is fixed to the mast just above the deck. The car is a modified Allen track slide and is moved using a multiple purchase lead aft – see pic below



The strut tube is lightweight and is fixed, in this case, to the anchorage point of what was the puller. The pointer accurately indicates the neutral position of the mast for each rake setting and is visible to both crew and helm. The mechanical advantage of this arrangement is greater than the deck mounted version and thus expands the scale of movement; in fact the gap between each rake setting represents a 3 mm movement of the mast in the gate. The greater the rake, the lower the strut. The car is at the bottom of the track when the rake is 22°0 which leaves more of the mast to behave naturally when it's very windy.



The previous pic shows the position of the car and pointer at neutral when the rake is at 22°8. In light airs the car can be pulled up to pre bend the mast; one division is equivalent to removing one medium chock. Moving the car and pointer down one division is equivalent to adding a chock. Obviously “chocks” can be added or removed at any rake setting. Half a division is equivalent to a thin chock. The car can be locked in any position using the purchases e.g. forward, for tight three sail reaches. The whole arrangement is precise and clearly visible. The car can be moved from the slots in the centreboard case, shown as “UP” or “DOWN”. This again, is simple and visible- see below.



Of course it may be very tempting to change fundamental rig settings, like mast bend and rake while racing. However, each adjustment is bound to result in a lapse in concentration, hence the view that you stick with the settings you have in a short race unless there is a dramatic change in windspeed.

Pulling a string mid- race when there is no certainty over the outcome is just guesswork. Investing time in two boat tuning with a like minded team (in a range of conditions) is the most efficient way of acquiring fast settings; this is the time to experiment at no cost. Also, there is absolutely no substitute for spending time in the boat.

Keith Walker

Technical V2.0

Coming around again..

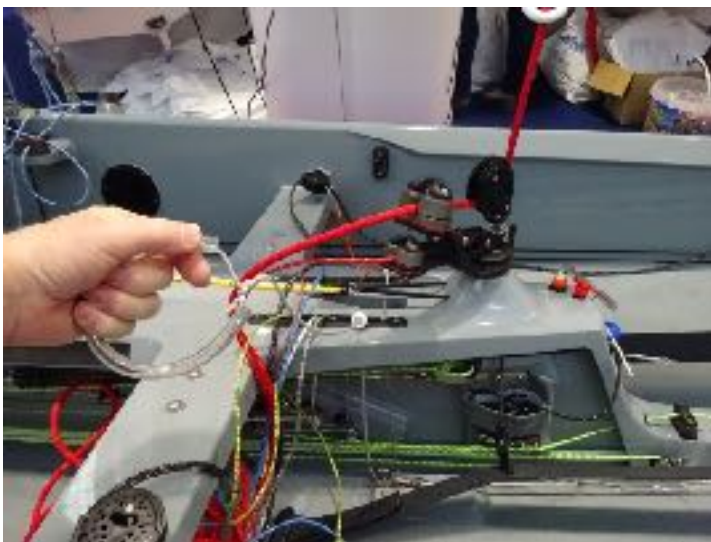
What goes around comes around, you just have to wait long enough for it to come back into fashion. So hold onto those purple cord flares and that knitted tank top, you just never know...

By Chris Turner..

One thought, two solutions but everything goes round and round again!

Dave Wade, Vyv Townend and Christian Birrell have been giving some thought on just how to get the boom on, or to windward, of the centreline when conditions so warrant.

Dave has opted to fit adjusters to the mainsheet bridle that will pull the boom across the transom. The control lines are led forward to the control console and are easily pulled on or let off when tacking. The system has similarities to transom traveller arrangements that were around decades ago in other classes so it just goes to show everything goes in cycles!



The same can be said for Vyv and Christian's solution which is to go back to using a hoop for the mainsheet take-off. Now I always liked hoops as they were great to haul yourself back into the boat when the boat unexpectedly heeled to windward but the hoop Vyv and Christian have fitted is a 21st Century version and is similar to that used by Merlins as it has a square top upon which a traveller is mounted. The mainsheet can be drawn to windward and simply cleated off.

I'll leave it to others to debate the finer points of the systems but both appear to work successfully and it will be interesting to see how the two teams get on at Lyme. What can be said with confidence though is that, having seen these two systems, plenty of people have put their thinking caps on and a third variant, using strops attached to the side tanks instead of a hoop is on the drawing board. Funnily enough I recall fitting strops to K9538 when I binned the full length traveller in 1978.....

Chris Turner





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If you have any suggestions or can help in any way then please feel free to contact Publicity@FireballSailing.org.uk. Don't forget, you can follow us on Twitter @ukfireball on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/UKFireballClass/> and visit our website <http://www.fireballsailing.org.uk> - There's loads of useful information on the site, from clubs where Fireballs are sailed, to technical, rigging and tuning guides, information about future open meetings, National, European and World Championships, reports and results from past events large and small. The discussion forum where (almost) anything goes, the classifieds for buying and selling all things Fireball. We're in the process of building an archive of older material so if you have anything which might be of use or ideas and suggestions, please get in touch.

Don't forget the gallery where you can find photos of Fireballs old and new, fast & faster, at home and away.

If your club has an event this year or next which is even remotely connected to Fireballs we want to know so we can tell the wider community.

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Edited by Andy Robinson

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